

# SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE DEALING WITH MENTAL AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

## STARTING THE CONVERSATION

When a family member is drinking too much, using drugs, or struggling with a mental disorder, your support can be key to getting them the treatment they need. Starting the conversation is the first step to getting help.

### How You Can Help

- 1 IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE TIME AND PLACE.** Consider a private setting with limited distractions, such as at home or on a walk.
- 2 EXPRESS CONCERNS AND BE DIRECT.** Ask how they are feeling and describe the reasons for your concern.
- 3 ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS AND LISTEN.** Listen openly, actively, and without judgement.
- 4 OFFER TO HELP.** Provide reassurance that mental and/or substance use disorders are treatable. Help them locate and connect to treatment services.
- 5 BE PATIENT.** Recognize that helping your loved one doesn't happen overnight. Continue reaching out with offers to listen and help.

### What to Say

"I've been worried about you. Can we talk?  
If not, who are you comfortable talking to?"

"I see you're going through something.  
How can I best support you?"

"I care about you and am here to listen. Do  
you want to talk about what's been going on?"

"I've noticed you haven't seemed like  
yourself lately. How can I help?"

For more resources, visit  
[www.SAMHSA.gov/families](http://www.SAMHSA.gov/families).

If you or someone you know needs help,  
call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for free and  
confidential information and treatment referral.

# HELPING A LOVED ONE DEALING WITH MENTAL AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

You may suspect or discover your loved one is dealing with a mental illness, drinking too much, or using drugs. As a family member, you can play a central role in getting them the help they need.

## REMEMBER MENTAL AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS ARE TREATABLE

People can, and do, recover. Family support can make all the difference. For more information, visit [www.SAMHSA.gov/families](http://www.SAMHSA.gov/families).

## TALK TO YOUR LOVED ONE

Express your concern and tell them that you're there to help. Create a judgement-free and loving environment to foster conversation and openness.



## BE OPEN

Discuss your family history of mental illness or drug and alcohol use, if relevant. It may help your loved one feel less alone.



## SHOW COMPASSION

Be patient as you help your loved one locate resources and treatment services.



## BE SURE TO CARE FOR YOURSELF TOO

Being a caregiver can be highly stressful and emotionally draining.



## SEEK SUPPORT

If you or a loved one needs help, call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** for free and confidential information and treatment referral.



# **SAMHSA**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD) • [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)